



SECRET

Page 2 of 13  
Copy \_\_\_ of 9

NRO and USAF review(s) completed.

INFORMATION PLAN

CLASSIFICATION: SECRET

TITLE: 58-A-3 THE WS-117L PROGRAM

REFERENCES: ARPA Memorandum to Secretary of the Air Force, dated 28 February 1958, Subject: "Reconnaissance Satellites and Manned Space Exploration".

Task Organizations:

Air Research and Development Command  
Strategic Air Command  
Air Defense Command  
Air Materiel Command  
Military Air Transport Command  
Air Training Command  
Alaskan Air Command  
CINCSAFE  
CINCPACAF  
CINCAIRC

Supporting Organizations:

Department of State  
U. S. Information Agency  
Lockheed Aircraft Corporation

1. OBJECTIVES

- a. Within the limits of Security, to inform the American public (and the world) of the facts and significance of the WS-117L program.
- b. To establish an orderly flow of news concerning WS-117L activities to promote media coverage and speculation favorable to the objectives of this plan. To discourage speculation in the press which would lead to the affixation of labels such as "BIG BROTHER" and "SPY" to the WS-117L program.
- c. To show that the WS-117L is a most effective weapons system and, as such, is inextricably interwoven in the U. S. weapons arsenal.
- d. To advance the proposition that reconnaissance satellites are an extension of air power.

SECRET

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- e. To exploit the psychological implication of the WS-117L weapons system as a deterrent to potential enemy aggression.
- f. Through utilization of military and USIA information resources throughout the world, to contribute to world acceptance of President Eisenhower's Open Skies proposal and to directly promote the WS-117L program as a passive guardian of world peace.

## 2. SITUATION

### a. Background

- (1) Air Force cognizance of the probability of orbiting artificial satellites dates back to 1946 when the USAF directed the RAND Corporation to undertake a study to determine the technical feasibility of such a program. The first major breakthrough came in 1953 when the USAF Scientific Advisory Board reported to the Air Staff that high yield thermonuclear weapons could be produced in warheads of small weights and sizes. This technical breakthrough accelerated the development of the ICBM program. It followed that since the propulsion requirement for placing a satellite in orbit is the same order of magnitude as that required for an ICBM, the achievement of propulsion powerful enough to put a satellite in orbit became, in effect, a "fallout" of the ICBM program.
- (2) In 1954, as a direct result of the Scientific Advisory Board report, the Atlas (ICBM) program was accorded the highest priority in the Air Force. In 1955, General Operational Requirement (GOR) 80 established a Strategic Reconnaissance Weapons System. The stated operational objective - to provide continuous surveillance of pre-selected areas of the earth to determine the status of a potential enemy's war-making capability.
- (3) ARDC, which had inherited the RAND study program in 1953, assigned the satellite project to its Ballistic Missile Division in 1955. The Development Plan for WS-117L was approved in July 1956 and was followed shortly by supporting development directives. In October 1956, the development stage of the WS-117L program got underway with the award of a contract to Lockheed Aircraft Corporation for development and testing of the system.
- (4) On 28 February 1958, the newly-created Advanced Research Projects Agency, Department of Defense, which had been

S E C R E T

granted complete authority over military space projects, formally assigned responsibility for the WS-117L program to the Air Force and ordered the project accelerated and carried forward under the highest national priority in order to attain an initial operational capability at the earliest possible date.

b. The Weapons System

- (1) WS-117L consists of a number of separate systems designed to produce operational reconnaissance satellites. These include the Pioneer visual and [redacted] Advanced Visual [redacted] and Surveillance Visual, [redacted] versions. Including the Thor and Atlas test versions, a total of 76 satellites will be launched over a six year period. The test version covers 19 launchings, 10 Thor and 9 Atlas.

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25X1

- (2) The WS-117L Satellite will be known as the "Guardian".

3. EXECUTION

a. Concept

(1) Introduction

- (a) With the possible exception of nuclear power, no peacetime weapons system in the history of man approaches the challenge inherent in the WS-117L program. A revolutionary military development, it is geared to serve the major weapons systems in time of war. In time of peace, it would detect preparations for war and no nation would be free from its surveillance.
- (b) The far-reaching potential of the WS-117L program as a psychological factor in the cold war demands optimum preparation to insure the achievement of specific objectives critical to national policy. Thus, an information Plan, though ostensibly directed at informing the American public and minimizing unwarranted speculation in the Nation's press, can prove to be of incalculable value in setting the stage for the attainment of these objectives.
- (c) It is recognized that crucial decisions involved in maximizing the psychological import of the program will in some instances be beyond the purview of the Air Force. But, because of the impact here and abroad which must inevitably follow the controlled

S E C R E T

## S E C R E T

dissemination of official news relating to the program, these factors are considered in the basic information plan.

(2) Phasing

- (a) This plan will be implemented in three phases:
1. Phase ONE - The Thor Test Version Series.
  2. Phase TWO - The Atlas Test Version Series.
  3. Phase THREE - The Operational Series.
    - a. The Pioneer Version
    - b. The Advanced Version
    - c. The Surveillance Version

(3) The General Plan

- (a) Information generated by this plan embraces two inter-related areas:
1. The hard core news of the operation itself, emphasizing spot news in reference to preparation and performance of firing operations.
  2. The release of specific information calculated to support certain objectives listed in Para.1.
- (b) The WS-117L program is scheduled to extend beyond 1965. Any information action taken during the initial PHASES will affect, if not condition, the climate of public opinion prevailing during the introduction of subsequent PHASES of the program. The absence of planned and regular releases will not prevent publicity on the project. To the contrary, as in the case to date, it has resulted in much speculation and erroneous writing in the press, giving rise to politically unfavorable connotations such as "Big Brother" and "Spy". It is important, therefore, that all releases consistently and accurately reflect the objectives of this plan and that all contacts with the press be administered in a highly professional manner.
- (c) Security considerations, international political factors and the need to inform the American public combine to affect the presentation of this program to the public. Because of these diverse pressures, this plan calls for a gradual approach to the accomplishments of the objectives listed in Para. 1. In PHASE ONE, primary emphasis will be placed upon peaceful scientific research conducted by the orbiting satellites in the study of environmental conditions and the intricate testing program involved in launching and orbiting test vehicles. PHASE TWO (Atlas stage) will move closer to the

S E C R E T

military aspects of the project but will still stress scientific research and test procedures. The successful orbit of the first PHASE THREE (operational) vehicle will be exploited to the fullest extent. Exploitation will continue throughout PHASE THREE. Particular attention will be accorded overseas coverage and maximum cooperation will be provided the United States Information Agency. Commencing with PHASE THREE, objectives of this plan listed in Paras 1.c and 1.f will be provided additional emphasis.

(4) The Thor Test Version Series (PHASE ONE)

(a) General

1. The Thor test series, totaling 10 monthly launchings is scheduled to begin in November 1958 and will initiate the accelerated WS-117L program.
2. Primary objectives of PHASE ONE are to establish the premise that the Thor series is a test phase and to set the stage for PHASE TWO - the Atlas series of nine launchings scheduled to begin in June 1959. The last three Thor launchings will run concurrently with the first three Atlas shots.
  - a. Special emphasis will be accorded the space research factor of the Thor test program. This theme will stress the peaceful scientific research conducted by orbiting satellites in the study of environmental conditions. This will be included in all appropriate releases, speeches and interviews.
  - b. Reference to potentiality of the weapons system itself will be minimized during PHASE ONE. No overt attempt will be made to discourage such reporting or press speculation but every effort will be made to promote environmental findings and research results to divert PHASE ONE emphasis.

(b) Specific

1. Five basic press releases will initiate PHASE ONE and the general approach to the over-all WS-117L information program. These releases will be issued on appropriate dates selected by the Director of Information Services, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, and approved by the Asst. Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. They will include:
  - a. Background and acceleration of the program.

SECRET

- b. Air Force-Industry Team
- c. Cooke Test Base
- d. Test Facilities Static Tests (Ground firing of rocket engines)
- e. Construction of Tracking Stations.

2. No further announcement or release will be made until the first successful firing of the Thor test series.

3. Subject to supervision by the Director of Information Services, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, the Air Research and Development Command (Ballistic Missiles Division and the Air Force Missile Test Center) will conduct press operations relative to firings during PHASE I and II. Responsibility for press operations will be transferred from ARDC to the Strategic Air Command in PHASE III. An Augmentation Team, selected by the Director of Information Services, will supplement the BMD press task force and will be in a position, along with necessary equipment, three (3) days prior to the first scheduled Thor launching. The Augmentation Team will be assigned to ARDC and SAC for duty in subsequent firings as necessary.

4. Spot news handling by the press task force with reference to firing operations will conform to instructions issued by this headquarters based upon procedures established by the Department of Defense.

5. Coverage of the first successful launching will be a high-key effort and all necessary steps will be taken to insure necessary pre-dispositioning of informational resources. Upon completion of the first successful shot, an evaluation will be made concerning informational aspects of the operation. Deficiencies will be noted and appropriate action taken.

- a. The resources of the Augmentation Team will be addressed primarily to hometown releases, feature material and those facets of information which can be developed to favorable advantage for dissemination abroad in conjunction with the U. S. Information Agency. Releases will include still picture and captioned press releases, 16mm silent and aural coverage for television use, 16mm kodachrome footage for national colorcasts on television, 35mm black and white photographs

SECRET

and transparencies for newspaper, periodicals and Sunday supplement use.

- b. Hometown releases will identify (1) the test firing locale through visual or audio means; (2) the mission within the Air Force frame of reference; (3) the individuals, to include organization and home address; and, (4) the task the individual, or individuals is performing. All hometown releases will be processed as rapidly as capabilities permit to take full advantage of timing.

No. 77

- c. Key Air Force officers, scientists and technicians will be available for media interviews. Pertinent canned statements, along with brief biographies, will be disseminated as appropriate.
6. When practicable - depending upon length of satellite orbit and status of tracking facilities - press tours will be established at selected tracking stations to dramatize tracking coverage and highlight the scientific research aspects of the orbiting satellite.
7. In firing operations in which scheduled orbiting times are to be of such short duration as to create an impression of failure or an abortive operation in the public mind, a special release will be issued prior to the subject firing announcing the short orbit scheduled.
8. Should failure occur in any of the firings, a routine announcement will be made promptly, calling attention to the next scheduled firing. Specific firing dates, however, will not be released in advance.
9. Special features, speeches and interviews with prominent scientists affiliated or knowledgeable with the WS-117L program will emphasize the contribution to scientific research in being by the satellite program in the field of environmental space studies.
10. Providing the first Thor firing is successful, the second Thor firing and the remainder of the series will be played in medium to low key as the situation warrants.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

(5) The Atlas Test Version Series (PHASE II)(a) General

1. The Atlas test series, scheduled to begin in June 1959, will consist of nine monthly launchings from Patrick AFB, Florida. This phase will run concurrently with the last three launchings of PHASE I.
2. Primary objective of Phase II is to (a) complete the transitions from the testing phase to the operational phase, and (b) to establish the competence of the Atlas booster to project heavy loads into space.
  - a. Scientific research will continue to be emphasized, but this phase will also mark a more defined approach to the ultimate use of the WS-117L as a weapons system.
    1. There will be no spell-out of the program, but press releases and announcements quoting official sources will generalize as to the reconnaissance capability of the system but will emphasize the passive and peaceful implication of the program.

(b) Specifics

- No!
1. First benchmark will be the issuance of a national press release at the time the Atlas is moved into place at Patrick AFB, scheduled for April 1959. This release which will include newspaper, radio television and newsreel coverage, will indicate that the Atlas will boost a far greater weight into orbit.
  2. Press procedures and planning implementation for the first successful Atlas firing will be based upon the evaluation results of the informational effort accorded the successful Thor firing in PHASE I.
    - a. Press releases will differ from those disseminated in PHASE I to the extent that they will closely adhere to the objectives listed in Paragraphs (5)(a)2 above. Paragraph 5, page 7 will apply to the second successful Atlas firing.

S E C R E T

SECRET

COA-0104

Page 10 of 13

Copy of 9

- b. Exhibits of the satellite prototype will be placed in key cities throughout the United States and Europe. Number of exhibits and locations will be selected at a later date and announced to participating agencies by separate message.
3. Subsequent Atlas operations in PHASE II will be handled in routine fashion with a minimum of news generated other than announcements of successful firings and necessary progress reports.

(6) The Operational Series (PHASE III)

(a) General

1. The operational series consists of the Pioneer version, Advanced Version and Surveillance Version and embraces a total of 57 satellite launchings. The first launching (Pioneer) is scheduled for March 1960. The breakdown calls for 11 Satellites in the Pioneer version; 15 Advanced Versions; and 31 of the most sophisticated stage of the program, the surveillance Version. PHASE III marks the transfer of operational control of the WS-117L program to the Strategic Air Command.

(b) Specifics

1. Subject to the supervision of the Director of Information Services, Secretary of the Air Force, SAC will conduct press operations relative to firings during PHASE III.
2. It can be anticipated that the number of satellites in orbit by 1960 will be so numerous as to make satellite launchings commonplace insofar as press interest is concerned. Nevertheless, coverage of the first launching in PHASE III will be a high key effort, because of the nature of the program, and all necessary steps will be taken to insure pre-dispositioning of informational resources. Particular attention will be accorded overseas coverage and maximum cooperation will be effected with the United States Information Agency. Subsequent launchings and development in PHASE III warranting maximum effort will be exploited to the fullest extent.
3. At least three (3) months prior to the scheduled

SECRET

S E C R E T

launching of the first WS-117L operational vehicle initiating PHASE III, evaluation results of PHASE I and PHASE II will be reviewed by this headquarters. The results of this review, along with current political and military considerations, will determine the extent of PHASE III planning revision.

4. Subject to Security and policy considerations, selected pictures taken by orbiting satellites will be released to the press.

b. Assignment of Tasks

- (1) The Director of Information Services, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, will:
  - (a) In coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), monitor the execution of this plan and supervise the issuance of press releases, announcements, photographic and other informational material (SAFIS-3).
  - (b) Provide necessary guidance to subordinate units.
  - (c) Establish Air Force policy governing all informational aspects of the WS-117L program.
  - (d) Establish and direct procedures involving security.
  - (e) Detail a number of selected officers and airmen to form an Augmentation Team to be assigned to ARDC (Ballistic Missiles Division) Air Force Missile Test Center and SAC on temporary duty for the purpose of carrying out various aspects of this plan.
  - (f) Evaluate and process proposed magazine articles for use during the period of this plan.
  - (g) Prepare statements relative to the significance and scope of the WS-117L program for issuance at appropriate times by key Air Force officers assigned to this headquarters.
  - (h) Prepare an internal information program for world wide utilization.
  - (i) Initiate press tours at selected tracking stations.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Page 12 of 19  
Copy 4 of 4

- (j) Direct the exhibit placement operation as cited in Paragraph 3.
- (2) The Air Research and Development Command (ARD, AFMTC) will:
  - (a) Subject to instructions by the Director of Information Services, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, conduct press operations relative to satellite vehicle launchings in PHASE I and II.
  - (b) Prepare necessary press releases and other informational material as cited in Paragraphs 4 thru 10 (pages 7 and 8) and paragraph 5 (page 9).
- (3) The Air Defense Command, Military Air Transport Command, Air Training Command, Alaskan Air Command, CINCSAFE and CINAFRC, will:
  - (a) Upon direction, provide operational and logistical support to this headquarters, the Strategic Air Command or the Air Research and Development Command (ARD, AFMTC) in support of this plan.
- (4) The Strategic Air Command will:
  - (a) Direct the First Missile Division, Cooke AFB, to support the Ballistic Missiles Division (ARDC) in the conduct of press operations relative to firings of satellite test vehicles during PHASE I and provide logistical and administrative support to members of the Augmentation Team and members of the press during firing operations at Cooke AFB.
  - (b) Subject to instructions by the Director of Information Services, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, conduct press operations in PHASE III.

e. Coordinating Instructions

- (1) The Director of Information Services, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, will effect close coordination with the Director, Advanced Research Projects Agency, Department of Defense in the implementation of this plan.
- (2) Full coordination will be effected with the U. S. Navy, Point Magu on activities employing the Point Magu Range.
- (3) Provision will be made to assure that the spirit and insofar as applicable, the terms of Assistant Secretary of Defense Murray Snyder's 1 March 1958 Memorandum for

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

Page 13 of 13

Copy \_\_\_ of 9

the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force, subject: "Procedure for Press Coverage of Firings at the Missile Test Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida," be followed.

- (4) Credit in press releases will be given to prime and sub-contractors, cooperating on the WS-117L program, whenever practicable. This plan will be fully coordinated with Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, which, as prime contractor has the responsibility of providing press and informational assistance to implementing agencies.

#### 4. ADMINISTRATION

##### a. Security

- (1) The provisions of AFR 205-1 apply.
- (2) Procedures normally in effect in conjunction with public information activities will apply to all individual actions taken in the implementation of this plan.
- (3) The general nature of information to be protected is:
  - (a) Payload, or sub-systems involved in data gathering.
  - (b) Communication and ground command techniques.
  - (c) Launch schedules.
  - (d) Data gathering effectiveness of the system.
- (4) Implementation of this plan will be monitored by an Air Force Security Review project officer who will provide necessary guidance and security provisions throughout.

##### (5) COMMAND AND SIGNAL

Direct communications with this headquarters is authorized.

FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF:

ARNO H. LIEBMAN  
Major General, USAF  
Director of Information Service